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ABSTRACT

A case study examined a 1920 controversy between two newspapers. One of the last vestiges of the era of "yellow journalism" was the editorial "war" between the Kansas City "Star" and the Kansas City "Post" which culminated in a 1921 showdown. The "Star," a champion of main street interests and progressive Republican responsibility, was held in much higher esteem than the "Post," known for its pursuit of scandals, lurid crimes, and sex sagas. And yet, when a nationally known public health expert, Dr. Charles North, spent the summer of 1921 serving as a consultant to the Kansas City government, he chose the "Post" as a vehicle for his campaign for mandatory milk pasteurization. North and the "Post" fired sensationalistic broadsides, accusing the town of Kansas City, its charitable organizations and especially the "Star" of complicity in "killing babies." Only pasteurization of milk could clear up epidemics ravaging the nation, North claimed. The "Star," as a champion of small dairy farmers, opposed economic concentration of the industry that would result from a centralized pasteurization system. This unknown incident in the history of journalism raises questions about the use of emotion as a vehicle for arousing public interest in the details of scientific controversy. (Forty-two notes and two newspaper excerpts are included.) (MS)

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Dr. North and the Kansas City Newspaper War

Public Health Advocacy Collides With Main Street Respectability

Paper presented to
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SHORT ABSTRACT

DR. NORTH AND THE KANSAS CITY NEWSPAPER WAR

One of the last and most remarkable vestiges of the era of yellow journalism was the editorial "war" between the Kansas City Star and the Kansas City Post which culminated in a 1921 showdown. The Star, a champion of main street interests and progressive Republican respectability, was held in much higher esteem than the Post, known for its pursuit of scandals, lurid crimes, and sex sagas. And yet, when a nationally known public health expert, Charles North M.D., spent the summer of 1921 serving as a consultant to the Kansas City government, he chose the Post as a vehicle for his campaign for mandatory milk pasteurization. North and the Post fired sensationalistic broadsides, accusing the town of Kansas City, its charitable organizations and especially the Star of complicity in "killing babies." Only pasteurization of milk could clear up epidemics ravaging the nation, North claimed. The Star, as a champion of small dairy farmers, opposed economic concentration of the industry that would result from a centralized pasteurization system. This paper explores an unknown incident in the history of journalism which raises questions about the use of emotion as a vehicle for arousing public interest in the details of scientific controversy.

DR. NORTH AND THE KANSAS CITY NEWSPAPER WAR

Controversies over science and technology are often seen as recent phenomena, and modern observers have assumed that scientific issues were "largely unquestioned" until the past few decades.[1] In some cases, it is true, scientific controversies never received even remotely adequate attention.[2]

However, historical research is turning up a large number of open controversies involving science and technology. The battle over smallpox inoculation in Boston in 1721 is an early example.[3] William Randolph Hearst's use of Lederle Laboratories in 1906 to expose sewage contamination of oyster beds and ice houses is another.[4] Yet another is the 1924 air pollution controversy over the introduction of lead as an octane booster in gasoline.[5] Also, research into food and drug controversies and patent medicine abuse at the turn of the century[6] shows the value of new interdisciplinary efforts in the history of science and the history of journalism.

Controversies in science and technology usually involve either local problems, such as milk and water sanitation, or national level problems, such as air pollution, impure foods and drugs, and occupational dangers. In many cases, an emerging science or technology exposed (or caused) the problem before a solution or an alternative was recognized.

For example, concerns about impure milk were not new. Public health advocates voiced concerns as early as 1824 in the U.S., and the press found an interest as early as 1858, when Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper gave extensive coverage to the "swill milk" scandal,[7] which involved overt adulteration. By the turn of the century, public health advocates were worried about the unseen agents in food contamination. Scientists were able to establish verifiable cause-and-effect relationships between bacterial contamination and milk handling procedures which raised serious questions about the nature of the commercial milk distribution system. While the problem was fully understood by about 1906, the solution -- pasteurization -- was not

nearly as obvious as it might appear today. But as pasteurization technology was brought in line with the science of bacteriology, public health advocates began arguing more and more vehemently for laws requiring the process.

The now-forgotten fights over milk pasteurization took place in virtually every city in the nation between 1910 and 1930. Controversy first broke out in big East Coast cities. Compromise between public health advocates, who wanted mandatory pasteurization, and the producers of unpasteurized "raw" milk was necessary in part because the technology of pasteurization was not mature.[8] After World War I, the controversy over pasteurization took on a new character, centering in the Midwest and involving increasingly vocal public health reformers.

When the battle began brewing in Kansas City in the summer of 1921, the rest of the Midwest looked on with interest. Despite the city's central role in Midwestern affairs, and despite the city's longstanding newspaper feud, many people were caught off guard when the milk fight and the related newspaper war broke down into a loud shouting match. The city's dairy commissioner, who attended a professional convention in the fall of 1921, reported that he had been asked by colleagues, "What was ailing Kansas City?" [9]

Origins of the Milk Controversy

Milk has been used for food since the dawn of history. Today, it has a reputation that puts it on a par with mom, apple pie and the flag.[10] This repuation was not so benign at the beginning of the 20th century. Dozens of U.S. and European epidemiological and bacteriological studies demonstrated a relationship between frequently contaminated milk and typhoid, scarlet fever and cholera epidemics. One study showed that the 10 percent infant mortality rate in New York City in 1903 was strongly linked to contaminated milk, while another found that over eight percent of Boston's milk was contaminated by tuberculosis.[11] In 1901, USDA noted that out of 330 well known epidemics in the mid to late 1800s, some 295 occurred in England or America. "This is probably due to the fact that the English and Americans consume raw milk while on the continent, milk is rarely consumed without being boiled," the study concluded.[12] Machines based on Louis Pasteur's new science of

bacteriology had become common in Europe,[13] and reached the US in the 1890s. In 1896, an article in the Baltimore News American carried a picture of a baby bottle sterilizer at work.[14] But this bottle by bottle processing did not address problems of widespread contamination in the general milk supply.

East Coast city commissions began calling for mandatory pasteurization of all milk around 1910, and the issue rapidly became political. A Boston Herald cartoon of 1912 depicted a legislator caught between milk producers and dealers as the figure of death grinned from the background at an infant.[15] Hearst's Journal also carried editorials attacking the dairy industry and calling for strict laws.[16]

Not everyone was convinced that pasteurization would stop epidemics; early "flash pasteurizers" not only did not kill disease-causing bacteria, but even worse, defective pasteurizers helped milk dealers disguise sour milk and resell it. Moreover, the new technology proved to be threatening to small farmers, who "were fighting with their backs to the wall, violently opposed" to local and state laws for pasteurization.[17] Since there were 50 small dairies for every one large dairy, "the fight took on the appearance of a few large dealers trying to put the small ones out of business and gain a monopoly."[18]

This held true even in the face of typhoid epidemics. For example, even after several deaths from typhoid in the milk supply, milk dealers in Danville, Va. "say the proposed (mandatory pasteurization) law will drive men out of business," the Baltimore Sun reported. [19]

Requiring all milk to go through a few pasteurizers didn't make life easier for dairy farmers and milk distributors who faced already complex market problems. After a 1916 revision of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, strikes by groups of industry workers against a number of employers could legally take place, and dozens of strikes occurred in the dairy industry. In the summer and fall of 1921, when the Kansas City newspaper war broke out, New York City and Cincinnati, among others, were embroiled in milk delivery strikes over basic issues of wages, hours and benefits. Such controversies, whether involving wage and hour issues or public health issues, received a consistently high amount of coverage from local newspapers. A milk strike or a pasteurization order today would probably be ignored by the media, and this reflects a shift in

news emphasis away from the homespun dilemmas of everyday life to our current global arena of events and ideas. But in 1921, the supply of milk had just begun to exceed demand following World War I, and news about the dairy industry was taken seriously.

The Kansas City Press

Milk pasteurization was controversial in many locations, but nowhere did the advocates and opponents of the new technology lock horns as publicly or violently as Kansas City in 1921. Much of the reason for this has to do with the nature of the two major Kansas City newspapers, the Star and the Post.

The Star was a crusading paper, well known for its progressive views and high standards of journalism. From its founding in 1880, publisher William Rockhill Nelson hired detectives to investigate rigged elections, waged unrelenting war on gang rule, and led a strident crusade against crooked lotteries. In the process, Nelson made an enemy in one lottery owner, Fred G. Bonfils, who fled to Colorado. [20]

In 1895, Bonfils and partner Harry H. Tammen became owners of their first newspaper, the Denver Post. The two men bought their second newspaper, the Kansas City Post, in 1909, with revenge against Nelson "undoubtedly" on their minds.[21] By that time, Bonfils and Tammen were well known as the most bizarre yellow journalists in America. The Denver Post mounted wild attacks on public figures and was considered an outright disgrace to journalism.[22] It was known for its startling red and black headlines and for an executive office with red walls called the "bucket of blood." Yet the Denver Post often posed as a champion of the people. Tammen once claimed: "Yes, we're yellow, but we're read and we're true blue." [23]

Bonfils and Tammen reflected a reckless frontier journalism translated into the "yellow" era of the 1890s and early 1900s. Personal attacks between newspapermen were certainly nothing new to Kansas. One editor of wrote of a colleague at the Leavenworth Kansas Times that even dogs would pass him by, "writhing in agony in search of a cleaner post." [24] But that was the 1870s, when the public had an appreciation for this entertaining form of journalism. The men who fought with "quills, type-sticks and six-guns," had all passed away -- except Bonfils and Tammen.

Progressive, conservative, even tame, Kansas City now had a newspaper that provided residents with enough crime news and sex sagas "to have sent the Marquis de Sade to a hermitage," according to historian Gene Fowler.[25] The Kansas City Post constantly berated the crusading Star. While Nelson tried to ignore it, and the feud between the two papers became so bitter that he advised reporters and editors that to even read the Post was to risk summary dismissal. The two newspapers fought over many issues, even after Nelson died in 1915, but the Kansas City milk fight of 1921 was the bitter end for an antiquated form of journalism.

Any issue could have touched off one last fight. As it was, an independent expert came into a thicket of political factions, media rivalries and technical issues determined to ignite any combustibles that might be handy. The expert was Dr. Charles E. North.

Who was Charles E. North?

If saving lives were a criteria for fame, Dr. Charles E. North might be listed among the nation's most important scientists. As it was, however, North died in relative obscurity, his accomplishments unrecognized even by the industry councils he helped organize.

A quick inspection of any milk carton shows the result of his work: "Pasteurized, Homogenized, Grade A." The fact that all milk is pasteurized owes virtually everything to North's crusades and his inventions between 1906 and 1930. The process of homogenization, which mixes up various components of milk, owes something to North's mechanical inventions during the 1930s and '40s. And the "Grade A" label is also North's, invented in 1910 and originally designed to indicate which milk had the lowest bacteria counts [10,000/cc unpasteurized, or two times lower than today's Grade A Pasteurized standard] and would therefore be safe for very young children. [26]

North grew up on a dairy farm in New York. He earned his bachelor's degree in 1893 and his M.D. at Columbia University in 1900. He also studied public health at Harvard.

Early in his career, North led commissions which came up with rules for sanitary dairies and testing milk. By 1912, one commission he headed began advocating mandatory pasteurization. As a result, New York

City turned to strong pasteurization laws and tight regulations for unpasteurized "raw" milk, which had to be "Grade A." Dozens of other cities followed between 1912 and the late 1920s, and North set up an independent "Public Health Bureau" that consulted with over 50 state and city governments.

North was probably influenced by the long struggle of Louis Pasteur for recognition of his theories. A recent book, "The Pasteurization of France," demonstrates how the Pasteur's success, which had tremendous social impacts on everything from handling food to performing surgery, actually hinged on a concerted campaign to convince public and private physicians of the implications of his scientific research. Pasteur is remembered because he reached out far beyond his own scientific community. [27]

North worked to improve the dairy industry his entire life, and in a similar manner, reached out as far as he could. Along with public health consulting, North lobbied legislatures, organized industry councils and testing laboratories and initiated public relations efforts. He also turned to invention, and was granted over 100 US patents for improvements to dairy processes and equipment between 1918 and 1956 -- a number that gives him serious status as an inventor. In short, North was totally obsessed. He used any and every possible means for improving the nation's milk supply, which in the early decades of the 20th century, spread the epidemics that were the gravest threat to public health.

He was "the nation's foremost milk expert" [28] at a time when the public was much more concerned about the dairy industry than it is today. More than any other individual at the time, Charles E. North was the logical choice for a public health consultant when Kansas City, Mo. needed help studying its dairy industry and proposing reasonable regulations. A telegram from the mayor of Kansas City confirmed his appointment as consultant in May, 1921.

The Kansas City Milk Controversy Heats Up

The controversies in Kansas City, Mo. began in July, 1920 when the city ordered health inspectors to close down dairies and arrest managers that sold Grade B or C milk as Grade A. The city was trying to

bring order into a chaotic and complex situation. At this time, only a fraction of the milk supply was inspected -- not by the public health department, but by a Kansas City women's club, the Consumer's League.

The League "certified" raw milk for 67 distributors and 120 dairy farms, mostly on the Missouri side of town, which was predominantly upper-class and Republican. But no one inspected the 17 major distributors, mostly on the Kansas side of town, which sold a much larger volume from about 1,000 dairy farms. Most of this milk was pasteurized, although often in a way that did not kill disease-causing bacteria.[29]

Following the city's new inspection order, distributors lowered prices paid to dairy farmers. Farmers responded with a milk strike that shut off most of the supply. But by December, distributors began selling out-of-state milk delivered in refrigerated rail cars.[30]

By early 1921, the dairy industry in Kansas City was deeply and bitterly divided. The distributors fought small, independent dairies which sold raw milk. The Star and progressive Republicans backed the small dairies, while the Post and a majority of Democratic city councilmen favored big milk distributors and pasteurized milk.

The small dairymen claimed that big distributors kept their wholesale prices low while making enormous profits; pasteurization, they said, was just another way to control the market. Dealers claimed that the cost of maintaining a retail network and large processing plants took so much money that profits were actually low. Public health experts and reformers felt that priority should be placed on standards of quality in order to prevent disease. [31]

The controversy reached a fever pitch all over the Midwest during this time, aggravated by other farm problems. Hotly contested milk strikes and dealer price wars spread in 1921 to Spokane, then Fort Worth and San Francisco, and subsequently throughout the Midwest.[32]

When controversy over Kansas City's milk regulations accelerated in the spring of 1921, the mayor cabled North, who arrived by train within two weeks. He knew he was walking into a hornet's nest. "I found myself thrown into the midst of political, social and commercial battles that had been broiling for years and had now come to a head," North wrote. [33]

Covering the Milk Fight

The "milk fight" did not start out as a point of contention between the two newspapers, but both pursued the story from clearly different perspectives. When dairy strikes broke out in the fall of 1920, a Dec.1, 1920 Star story noted that Kansas City civic leaders were beginning to inspect milk bottling plants. The Post, meanwhile, carried a story Dec. 5 on the arrest of one milk distributor by the city health director after repeated violations of the ordinance. In January, 1921, the Star promoted the Consumer's League's annual "white list" of acceptable raw milk dairies in several articles.The Post ignored the the League, which was a group of women's clubs dedicated to civic improvement. The League said it represented 40,000 women in the Kansas City region.

By February, many farmers said they were victims of market manipulation by the major distributors. A Missouri-based farmers co-op dropped its price by two cents to compete with the majors and their out-of-state milk The farm co-ops claimed that the milk hauled long distances was not being inspected and had bacterial counts far higher than would be permissible under the July, 1920 ordinance. Both the Star and the Post covered the dispute factually in Feb. 21 articles. The Post emphasized a "milk price war" and the dumping of surplus milk into sewers. The Star, under the headline "Milk Plot Charged," noted that out-of-state dairy herds were not inspected for disease and that "outlaw milk" from as far away as Colorado and Oklahoma could be sold. After this, the issue apparently lay dormant for most of the spring of 1921.

Then in June of 1921, a Kansas City Post editor apparently asked North to write a column on the milk controversy, according to North's notes (although it is possible that North approached the Post). There is no indication that North was paid for the columns, either in his notes or in his bank records. [34] The most likely explanation, given North's familiarity with the press, is that he wanted or needed at least one newspaper as an ally. North had used the press before, when in 1906 William Randolph Hearst asked Lederle Laboratory, and its employee, Dr. North, to check the oyster beds in New York harbor for disease. And as

early as 1907, North noted that the press "did much to advance the importance of pasteurization in the minds of the public."[35]

The Post printed the first of 24 columns on its front page Sunday, June 26. It emphasized the "otherwise remarkably progressive city's backwards condition" when it came to milk. "Not interested in local rows" said one of the subheads over the column. The next day, North claimed that the situation had become so controversial that "Diogenes would need a searchlight" to sort through the conflicting claims of corruption and prejudice by various factions, including "scheming women" -- a thinly veiled slap at the Consumer's League.

After a few Post columns, it became clear that North was using sensational tactics. Perhaps in response, the editors at the Star decided to expose his expertise as textbook posturing. On July 8, Star reporters asked the nation's foremost milk expert if he would try his hand at milking a cow. Thinking he would be taken to a nearby dairy barn, he agreed to meet the reporters the next morning.

Instead of a dairy barn, Star reporters escorted North to the Baltimore Hotel in downtown Kansas City, where a lobby full of spectators surrounded a Guernsey cow. To the sound of catcalls and jeers, North sat down on the milking stool and started pulling. Since Star reporters and the crowd did not know that North grew up on a dairy farm, North thought at first it would be an easy job. But the crowd made the cow tense, and as the crowd grew louder, North got less and less milk. Finally, he managed to calm first the crowd and then the cow. After a few quarts, Star reporters had to concede that North did know something about cows. "Dr. North really did milk Vixen (the cow); rather hesitatingly, it is true, and by dint of much hard work and perspiring," a Star news article said.[36] Still, the Star continued to use quotation marks around references to North as a dairy "expert" or "so-called expert."

It is unclear what triggered the change in the tone of North's columns, although the hotel incident may have been a factor. But if North was "not interested" in local controversy, he could hardly have expected a calm reaction after a July 10th column blamed the Chamber of Commerce, the Consumers League and the Star for the city's high infant

mortality rate. The "White List" system of private inspections "does not prevent babies from dying," North said.

The next day was even more emphatic: "Nothing Funny About Baby Deaths" was the headline over a July 11 North column which ran over 50 inches of text and included photographs depicting a typhoid-ridden Kansas City child.

The Star responded the next day by quoting an expert in child nutrition as saying pasteurized milk was not as good as raw milk for babies.[37] And it followed up with a July 27 story about a year-old lawsuit over pasteurized milk which was found to contain fly maggots.[38]

It is interesting to note that North and reporters for both newspapers went to some lengths in explaining the details of public health and nutrition to the public. In fact, one of the remarkable aspects of the 84 clips from the newspaper war is the length and depth of information about the controversy. Many articles are enormously long by modern standards. The extent to which detail is employed is intriguing. Unlike most modern science news articles, both the Star and the Post took pains to probe intricacies of the issue, such as bacterial counts, details of testing methods and the mathematics of infant mortality statistics. Yet the approach was consistently sensational and emotional.

On July 30, the Post fired a broadside. First, it gave saturation coverage to recommendations which North's Public Health Bureau presented to the City Council. In the center of the Post's July 30 front page, the headline read: "Ban Dangerous Raw Milk." After two months of investigation and controversy, North recommended a ban on raw milk with a bacteria count over 30,000 per cc. At this time, much of the raw Kansas City milk had bacteria counts of one to 10 million bacteria per cc. The market impact would mean all "Grade B" raw milk -- about 75 percent of the supply -- would have to be sent to pasteurizers or thrown away.[39] This would be a special problem in summer months when heat helped bacteria multiply more quickly, the Post reported.

The Post's July 30 front page also included a banner headline above the flag proclaiming: "Star Trick Exploded," with the text of a telegram indicating that the expert quoted on July 12 by the Star actually supported North's position on pasteurization. On the same front

page, the Post ran an editorial that claimed North "has met exactly the ruthless and conscienceless hostility of the Star that he was told to expect." The editorial berated the Star, which it said belonged only "in the homes of predatory wealth," and asked: "Has the Star quit again in the milk fight?"

"Ruthless Hostility" vs. "Sinister Influence"

The Star was not giving up. In a series of news articles in early August, it kept up opposition to North's proposals for stiff regulations. On August 4, a Star headline read: "North's bill a muddle -- raw milk men reach conclusion it's to force them out." On August 5, the Star claimed the North proposal violated the copyright law and that "expert propaganda here is directed against raw milk." On August 7, it ran a letter from an editor of the Rural New Yorker which said "milk dealers are usually a source of revenue to Dr. North," and claimed his credentials as an expert were not valid. And on August 8, a Star headline claimed that "40,000 women disapprove" of North's bill -- the women being those purportedly represented by the Consumers League and related groups.

The Post fired back with editorials and articles concerning five deaths in a milk-related typhoid epidemic which occurred in Wichita, Kansas that summer. "As we see the right, Wichita's typhoid (epidemic) is a lesson for Kansas City," the Post said in a front-page editorial. The editorial also berated Star editors for "blindness and stubbornness in the face of facts."

The Star and its sister paper, the Times,* also attacked North's figures on infant mortality in news articles in October. One headline read: "Facts Again Crack North." The local medical society questioned the birth rate which North and the health department used as a basis for establishing the death rate in Kansas City. "The actual facts are in our favor," said a Times news article Oct. 11. In an editorial castigating North, the Times said "amazing methods (have been) used by a medical man in what was supposed to be an earnest endeavor to gather the facts on which to base a scientific milk ordinance."

The Post fired back Oct. 14: "The (medical society's) report ... is not fair and unbiased," the Post said in an editorial. "Can you beat

it for effrontery, philistinism, provincialism and absolutely conscienceless conduct on the part of supposedly scientific men?" Then, when the medical society apparently backed off the report, and supported North's interpretation of the statistics, the Post trumpeted in a news article that "statistics were juggled ... in effort to discredit North." But the Star stuck to its guns. "The alarmist campaign of Dr. Charles E. North, milk 'expert,' is absolutely without foundation" it said in a mid-November news article.

As the time for a City Council vote on North's ordinance approached, both newspapers escalated the controversy. On December 16, the Times headlined a report on Consumer League objections to the proposal: "Rip Open North Bill." And that evening, the Star reported: "Forty thousand (women) ask council for action on bill." Meanwhile, the Post promoted the North bill, claiming in a Dec.16 news article: "Milk quality improves as a result of North." It also attacked the Star as "the organ of the opponents of pasteurization of milk," which printed "one-sided" reports.

The Kansas City Council made its decision December 20 in favor of the North ordinance requiring pasteurization for all but heavily inspected, low bacteria count raw milk. The difference in the two sets of multi-deck headlines printed the next morning is striking:

• Post, Dec. 20 --

Babies of KC win in fight for pure milk
Ordinance drafted by Dr. North Passed by City Council
Kansas City's babies have won!

•Times, Dec. 20 --

North Bill Passed
Milk ordinance pushed through Council with only one minor amendment
victory for big dealers
raw milk dealers are denied clauses that would help them
hot debate in sessions
aldermen openly declare that it means a monopoly
women's pleas disregarded
sinister influence is charged.

The Star and Times kept reporting the issue in the first months of 1922, especially the vows of Republican candidates to fight the "gross mis-representation and brazen defiance of wishes of citizens" in the North bill.

But the bill stuck. Democrats continued to dominate the city council in the 1920s and big distributors continued to dominate the milk market. Bonfils and Tammen, meanwhile, found an opportunity to sell the Kansas City Post in 1922 to the chairman of the state Republican party, who had also bought the Journal when it went into receivership a few years before.[40] Clearly, the wind had gone out of the Post's sails. In November, 1921, the Post's editor B.A. Jenkins resigned, citing conflicts with his religion.[41] With Tammen dying of cancer and Bonfils' old enemy Nelson gone, there was no point continuing the paper. In September 1923, the new Journal - Post , minus Bonfils and Tammen, ran a series of articles from every conceivable viewpoint, even those opposed to milk pasteurization. The controversy continued, but the war was over.

Yellow Journalism and Scientific Controversy

In a controversy involving scientific issues with a narrow range of public policy choices, both the Post and Star allowed coverage to degenerate into viscous yellow journalism. It seems ironic today, and probably seemed ironic even then, that the respectable Star fought pasteurization while two wild men from Denver backed a campaign to "save babies" from an office called the "bucket of blood." But of course, given North's total dedication to his crusade for pasteurization and the Star's previous commitment to the Consumer League and small dairies, the sides had already been chosen.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the Kansas City newspaper war is the extent to which emotions escalated. Certainly, the Post used North to enhance its respectability and North used the Post as the most expedient forum to advance his crusade. In order to generate support, and, he would argue, save the lives of babies, North made a coldly calculated decision to whip up a hot broth of science and emotion. That a scientist of North's stature would chose sensationalism is what makes the Kansas City fight an interesting episode in the history of science journalism. North brought all the emotional power of the press to bear

for his cause by writing a column for the Post and provoking a reaction from the Star. It apparently helped him win.

This is dangerous business, and not to be found on the list of recommended practices for today's scientists. Yet, is it possible that the use of emotional tactics had an element of social responsibility? North might argue that to exclude emotion from the reporting of complex issues would have meant abandoning the most powerful tool available to public health crusaders.

By the mid- and late-20th Century, politicians and physicians would grow much more circumspect in handling controversy, and the era of the yellow press slipped away with the deaths of Fred Bonfils and William Randolph Hearst. Yet the issue of emotional reporting is hardly resolved. Science writer Jon Franklin, for example, insists that emotion can be an opening for the average person to appreciate complex debates.

"Here, scientists may shiver," Franklin said. "Emotional writing has done science a lot of harm in the past, and good scientists have learned to despise it. And yet, we can't afford to shun the power... The (emotional) form has the power to reach across the great chasm and touch the nonscientist, and change minds." [42] Franklin advocates a responsible form of emotional journalism which uses literary devices to draw readers into the intricacies and human aspects of science.

Today's press is far more even-handed and responsible than the Star and Post of an earlier era. But we should not overlook a troubling paradox. Drawing the interest of a public that is bored with intricate technical facts is as much a problem today as it was for Dr. North in Kansas City that hot summer of 1921. Today, responsible media which scrupulously avoid all emotion in science reporting may run the risk of leaving the field open to tabloids run by the intellectual descendants of Bonfils and Tammen.

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[1] Nelkin, Dorothy, ed., Controversy: Politics of Technical Decisions (London: Sage Publications, 1979)

[2] Walter, Timothy and Lynne, "The Conspiracy of Silence: Media Coverage of Syphilis, 1906 - 1938," paper presented to Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, Washington, D.C., August 1989.

[3] Schwartz, Joshua, "Smallpox Immunization: Controversial Episodes," in Nelkin, ed., Controversy: Politics of Technical Decisions (London: Sage, 1979)

[4] Interview with Dr. Charles E. North, Feb. 22, 1961, transcribed by Dr. Milford of Lederle Laboratories, North Papers, National Agricultural Library.

[5] Bernton, Hal, and Bill Kovarik and Scott Sklar, The Forbidden Fuel: Power Alcohol in the 20th Century. (New York: Griffin, 1982). Also see Bill Kovarik "Incident Without Precedent: How New York Newspapers Covered an Early Environmental Controversy," to be submitted to Journalism History.

[6] Sally A. Harris-Wheeler, "The Ladies Home Journal Between 1890 and 1906: The Influence of its Crusade to Regulate Food and Drug Products;" and Virginia Sliman, "Alcoholism: The Virtuous Woman's Secret Vice, Turn of the Century Patent Medicine Abuse," both papers presented to AEJMC conference, Washington, D.C., August 1989.

[7] Francke, Warren, "Sensationalism and the Development of 19th-Century Reporting: The Broom Sweeps Sensory Details," Journalism History, 12:3-4, Autumn, 1985.

[8] For example, the National Commission on Milk Standards, headed by Dr. North, agreed to allow highly regulated raw milk as "Grade A" if dairies desired, but imposed less stringent requirements on pasteurized milk. North, however, was an early advocate of full pasteurization.

[9] Post, Nov. 27, 1921. The dairy commissioner said: "...The milk fight here has become a sort of byword in other communities. .. Nowhere did we find any local milk fight whatever, such as we have had for years in Kansas City. Everywhere we found dairy officials and health authorities wondering, 'What was ailing Kansas City.'"

[10] Not all the reputation is deserved. A recent Food and Drug Administration report showed bacterial contamination in six percent of the nation's milk supply, one-third of which involved pathogenic bacteria. "FDA's Dairy Product Safety Initiatives: 2nd Year Status Report," Milk Safety Branch, FDA, Oct. 1987.

[11] Sedgwick, William T., Principles of Sanitary Science and the Public Health (New York: Macmillan, 1905). Also, Magruder, G. Lloyd, "Milk as a Carrier of Disease and the Desirability of Pasteurization," USDA Bureau of Animal Industry, Circular # 153, 1901; and Strauss, Lina G. Disease in Milk: The Remedy Pasteurization. The Life Work of Nathan Strauss, (self-published) 1917; Sedgwick & Batchelder, Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. 126, 1892; and Rosenau, M.J., Preventive Medicine and Hygiene, New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1913.

[12] Magruder, G. Lloyd, "Milk as a Carrier of Disease and the Desirability of Pasteurization," USDA Bureau of Animal Industry, Circular # 153, 1901.

[13] North, "Memorandum on Pasteurization."

[14] Baltimore News American, Sept. 12, 1896.

[15] McNutt, The Modern Milk Problem.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Dowling to North, July 13, 1920, North papers, National Agricultural Library. Also see Case, Maxwell, The Pasteurization of Milk. (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Knickerbocker Press, 1925).

[18] North, "Memorandum on Pasteurization."

[19] "Milk Shortage Looms as a Result of Probe," Baltimore Sun October 24, 1921

20.Willard G. Bleyer, Main Currents in the History of American Journalism. (New York: DeCapo Press,1927).

21. Edwin Emery, The Press And America. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, 1972), p. 457.

22 Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1950).

23.Gene Fowler, Timber Line: A Story of Bonfils and Tammen (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Books, 1950).

24. Robert F. Karolevitz, Newspapering in the Old West: A Pictorial History of Journalism and Printing on the Frontier (Seattle, Wash.: Superior Publishing Co., 1965).

25. Fowler, Timber Line.

26. Norman Myrick, "He led the way to better milk," American Milk Review, July, 1954.

27. Bruno Latour, The Pasteurization of France (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1988).

28. Kansas City Post, June 21, 1921.

29. Charles E. North, "Kansas City Ordinance," undated handwritten notes, North Collection, National Agricultural Library.

30. Kansas City Star, Dec. 1, 1920 (Note: A group of 72 news clippings provided to North by a clipping service, along with 24 columns by North, was kept in a scrapbook among North's papers at the National Agricultural Library. The clippings, along with several others preserved by the Missouri Valley Historical Society, served as the basis for this study).

31. North, "Kansas City Ordinance."

32 James E. Boyle, "The Battle of Milk," Saturday Evening Post, Nov. 13, 1937.

33. North, "Kansas City Ordinance."

34. Ibid.

35. North, "Memorandum on Pasteurization."

36."Milks Cow in Hotel Lobby," Kansas City Star, July 9, 1921.

37. A controversy over the nutritional value of pasteurized milk vs. raw milk still crops up from time to time, as in Columbia, S.C. in 1983. The raw milk side is given in a book by William C. Douglass, M.D., The Milk of Human Kindness is Not Pasteurized. (Lakemont, Ga: Copple House Books, 1985).

38. "Cocoons Formed in Missouri Dairy Milk," Kansas City Star, July 27, 1921.

39. Henry Ayers, Milk Pasteurization, USDA bulletin No. 342, Sept. 1926.

* The Star's Nelson bought the morning Times in 1901, and controlled its editorial policy.

40. New York Times, May 19, 3:5, 1922.

41. New York Times, Nov. 4, 36:5, 1921.

42. Franklin, Jon, "Science Writing as Literature," Address as Chancellor's Distinguished Lecturer for the Public Understanding of Science, University of California at San Francisco, Jan. 14, 1987.

R. NORTH WRITES SPECIAL ARTICLES FOR POST READERS

pert Brought to Kansas City to Conduct Survey Will Give Public a Series of Stories Without Being Technical in Treatise on "Truth About Milk."

Dr. Charles E. North, the expert brought here by the y to make a survey of Kansas City's milk supply, has ned the staff of The Post for the period of his stay.

Beginning Sunday, Dr. North will write a series of ries for The Post, detailing the situation here as he has und it. He will discuss local conditions in the light of background of experience.

Dr. North promises that there will be nothing dry, abstract technical in his discussion of Kansas City's milk supply. In t, he has intimated that he will have some things to say that ll blow the lid off, so to speak.

The Post believes that Kansas City is interested in milk. It ows that nothing is more vital to the health and welfare of the mmunity than a pure milk supply. With this in mind The Post s arranged for Dr. North to write his series of articles.

Dr. North does not need The Post to sponsor him. He is con- lered by those who ought to know as the leading milk expert of e country and is big enough to stand upon his own feet. What has to say will be printed for what it is worth, irrespective of o may be hit.

The Post holds no brief for any of the parties to the milk con- versy. It believes that the public is entitled to all the facts, d it was with this in mind that it made the arrangement with . North.

"The Truth About Milk," is the title Dr. North says his ticles should bear, and The Post believes that they will be of in- rest to every person who has the welfare of the city at heart.

Remember, the first of Dr. North's articles will be printed in ie Sunday Post. Watch for it. The health—the life—of yor by is at stake.

KANSAS CITY POST
Saturday, June 25, 1921.

DR. NORTH TO TELL READERS OF K. C. POST ABOUT MILK

Expert Has Made Study of Problem for Many Years.

LONG EXPERIENCE

Training Dates From Early Boyhood on Dairy Farm, Supplemented by Medical Education and Vast Post-graduate Research.

Who is Dr. Charles E. North?

That question may have been asked by many since the employment of Dr. North by the city to make a survey of the milk supply.

The Post, which has arranged for a series of articles on milk by Dr. North, beginning Sunday, herewith presents a brief outline of some of the activities of Dr. North which have resulted in his being considered the country's foremost milk expert.

Dr. North comes from New York, where he conducts the North Public Health bureau and is secretary of the National Commission on Milk Standards.

Dr. North was born on a dairy farm in New York state. He grew up milking cows. He was ambitious to become a physician. His first college was Wesleyan university at Middletown, Conn. During his generals course there he had th eadvantage of studying milk under Professor Conn, famous milk bacteriologist. At Columbia university, New York city, he won his degre eof M. D. At Columbia he took post-graduate work in bacteriology. At Harvard university he took a course of instruction in public health.

His Profession.

Study of milk in its relation to public health is the chief professional business of Dr. North. In the past 15 [illegible] conducted milk surveys

DR. CHARLES E. NORTH.

KANSAS CITY POST
Saturday, June 25, 1921.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NORTH BILL PASSED

Dec. 20

Milk Ordinance Pushed Through the Council With Only One Minor Amendment.

VICTORY FOR BIG DEALERS

Pasteurization Plants Virtually Will Control City's Business, It Is Declared.

Raw Milk Dealers Are Denied Clauses That Would Help Them.

HOT DEBATE IN SESSIONS

Aldermen Openly Declare That It Means a Monopoly— Women's Pleas Disregarded.

The Dr. Charles E. North $20,000 milk dinance, referred to last night as the North pasteurizing ordinance," passed e council. It is asserted that the or- nance virtually puts the city's milk siness in the hands of the big pasteu- ation plants.

The joint milk committee, after angling over amendments for three eks; finally reported out the measure th only one, and that submitted by committee itself.

Efforts to have adopted six other endments asked for by raw milk rymen and many organizations failed the upper house.

OFFERED SUBSTITUTE ORDINANCE.

n the lower house Alderman William Morton moved to substitute for the rth ordinance a measure submitted week ago by Alderman Marvin H. tos. This ordinance contained all of scientific requirements of the North asure and the best requirements in present ordinance, and took into sideration amendments offered by "Consumers' League, the Jackson nty Medical Society, the raw milk rymen and Retail Grocers' Associa- n.

his ordinance met with approval of organizations named and scores of ic and women's organizations. It was ed down. No amendments were of- d in the lower body.

n the upper house the vote was 9 to nd in the lower house 10 to 5. The up was as follows:

pper house—For ordinance, Madden, cher, Harrington, Flynn, Mellody, naugh, Scannell, Carey, Hansell. gainst, Boppart, Sullivan, Smith, ill.

ower house—For ordinance, Roach, onnell, Fleming, Bivona, Sandler, on, Berry, Griffin, Simont, Manning gainst, Gates, Finucane, Hutchison, ton, Knoop.

he amendment offered by the joint mittee and adopted in both houses from Canada and Utica. Our milk comes from within a few miles of Kansas City. If the pasteurizing plants here had seen the light a few years ago we would not have had this trouble. The trouble arose over their forcing on the people a very low grade of pasteurized milk to compete with a high grade of raw milk."

A GEORGE HARRINGTON EFFORT FAILS.

Alderman George Harrington attempted to answer Mrs. Hoxie and to make her say she had indorsed Dr. North. But he failed. Harrington said Mrs. Hoxie had gone to the mayor and asked for Dr. Ravenel of the state university. Dr. Ravenel could not come and recommended Dr. North. Mrs. Page Carter, in reply, said it was she and two others of the league who had gone to the mayor and asked for Dr. Ravenel.

"When a man does not write good English," said Mrs. Hoxie in reply to Harrington, "writes one thing on one page, another thing on another page and then contradicts on the third page what was said on the other two, he is not a fit man to draw a milk ordinance."

Alderman John C. Bronaugh, chairman of the joint committee, said the only way an agreement on the North ordinance could be reached was to "let it go through as written and, if it becomes necessary, it can be amended later."

On the final vote in the lower house the ordinance was attacked by the anti-boss aldermen.

"Remember, aldermen, in voting for the North ordinance you are passing a measure that is absolutely a disgrace to this council and an insult to the intelligence of the people of Kansas City," said Alderman Morton.

"The ordinance as drafted means the elimination of hundreds of raw milk producers in the Kansas City territory, which is purely a victory for the pasteurizing plants."

THE GENTLEMAN FROM FIFTH WARD.

"Ah, sit down," shouted Alderman Tony Bivona, "goat" representative from the fifth ward. "We don't need you to tell us what we're doing."

"I rise to a point of order," insisted Alderman McDonnell. "The alderman from the twelfth ward is not talking on the ordinance."

"I am explaining why I am opposing the ordinance," continued Alderman Morton.

"He's out of order, Mr. Speaker," shouted several other members of the "goat" faction.

"I am not out of order, Mr. Speaker," insisted Alderman Morton. "I have the privilege of explaining my vote. I contend that I am talking on the ordinance, and I shall continue to talk, despite the objections of any member of this house."

"He's out of order—not talking on the ordinance—make him sit down," insisted the "goats."

"I have been subjected to gag rule before in this house. But tonight I am going to talk," announced Morton.

"All right; go ahead and talk," said Speaker Fleming, rapping with his gavel for order.

"It seems there is a peculiar influence at work in this council tonight," continued Alderman Morton. "You are demonstrating by your votes that you care nothing for the milk consumers of Kansas City. And by eliminating raw

BABIES OF K. C. WIN IN FIGHT FOR PURE MILK

Ordinance Drafted by Dr. North Passed by City Council.

Kansas City's babies have won!

A pure, safe milk supply is assured for Kansas City as a result of the passage, intact, of the Dr. Charles E. North milk ordinance by the city council Monday night.

The ordinance became a law Tuesday morning, when it was signed by Mayor Cowgill.

Mayor Cowgill said he was glad the ordinance had been passed intact, as drawn by Dr. North, and had not been weakened by amendments.

Enforcement of the milk ordinance will not begin for 90 days as provided in the ordinance.

J. E. Earnshaw, food and dairy commissioner, said his office would begin at once to send out notices to dairymen instructing them that the issuing of new permits would begin 30 days from the signing of the ordinance.

In the face of persistent efforts of several members of the Consumers' league and the raw milk dairymen to weaken the standards established by the milk expert by loading it down with amendments the action of the council was a distant tribute to Dr. North.

Politics was injected into the milk situation in the series of public hearings held by the joint milk committee of the council by those opposing the ordinance.

The Consumers' league enlisted the aid of the "anti-boss" aldermen in the lower house of the council to support the 46 amendments offered by the league.

And the raw milk dairymen engaged Floyd Jacobs, attorney, to represent them with the apparent purpose of swinging a factional vote in the council to the amendments.

Both attempts failed to defeat the North measure.

Alderman Bronaugh outlined briefly the circumstances leading up to the decision of the city to engage a milk expert to survey the situation in Kansas City.

"It was decided last spring that Kansas City should have an expert on milk to determine the needs of the city in the matter of a new milk ordinance," he said.

"These very women who are here tonight (pointing to Mrs. George H. Hoxie and a group of Consumers' league members), agreed that we should have an expert.

"And it was members of the Consumers' league," he declared, "who suggested to Mayor Cowgill that Dr. Ravenel of Missouri be selected.

Declines to Serve.

"Dr. Ravenel declined to serve. Then the women told the mayor they would

ordinance and to h parties.

Vote Is Overwhelmi

The vote on the N both houses was ov vorable.

In the upper house for passage and four

The lower house for passage.

The galleries wer spectators, many of t the upper house was

The clerk announce nance as the first docket.

Alderman John C. man of the joint milk council, who conducte ings since the contro spring, took the floor

"The committee, aft and study, decided the be weakened if any gested were tacked o naugh said.

"Therefore we re passed as it stands. changes are found n food and dairy depa be made later."

Then began a fight the council chambers two hours.

First, Alderman Be that section 10 of the be amended by loweri of the bacteria count milk from 30,000 to 5

Before the amendme on Estil asked the floor for Lloyd Jacobs.

Raw Milk Extolled.

In a long complaint, toward the spectators, the merits of raw milk He asked that three adopted—the 50,000 ba raw milk; changing t for raw milk from 24 permitting cooling of ing in the bottles, inst provided in the ordina

Jacobs painted an ele ture of the raw milk "put out of business" 30,000 count requireme

He declared the babie required raw milk.

His plea for raw mi lives of Kansas City's dicted testimony of doctors of Kansas Ci hearings, who stated t boiled the milk first.

Jacobs spoke in sar the "New York milk e been brought to Kansa a milk ordinance.

As Jacobs conclude speech Alderman Brona up sharply on his di Dr. North.

"I do not care to put against that of one o foremost milk experts experience," Alderman

Indorsed by Doctors.

"This committee tre nance in the light of a h he added.

"The Jackson County has indorsed the ordina

"If we had adopted amendments offered, have had anything left ordinance."

Mrs. Hoxie, grante charged the ordinance not clear and contradic

"Why he hasn't eve English," she cried.

"Why should we gi ideas and accept those Was the substance of h

In the lower house members voted against in a body.

Their spokesman, Ald